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782 washed entrails, together with a small bamboo container
787 filled with the goat's blood, was placed on the ground in
789 front of the altar. The old man and woman now chanted as
[622] before, after which the meat was taken away and distributed to all present under the supervision of the village Mandal, or head-man. The goat was offered first to Konchen and then to all the other spirits. During the whole of this celebration none of the spectators, of which there must have been fifty or sixty, paid the slightest attention to what was going on. As we later noticed, this was the case on all such occasions: the people merely sat round drinking and talking; but I did hear a child reproved for making too much noise while the actual chanting was in progress.

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● 491 If one takes the night mail from Calcutta it is easily possible, by motoring from Siliguri, to reach Gangtok, the capital of independent Sikkim, well before lunch on the following morning. The motor road at present ends at Gangtok, but the Talung Valley can be reached the following evening by any moderately active walker. The actual distance is about twenty-five miles; but included in this is a descent of nearly three thousand feet, immediately followed by an ascent of like amount. This drop and subsequent rise is repeated again at the end of the journey, but fortunately on a smaller scale. If really in a hurry it would be possible to reach the Talung in something under thirty-six hours from Calcutta; but having crossed the rickety suspension bridge across the Teesta, the sole means of access to the valley, one steps backward in time, so to speak, into another world. In
181 Calcutta (said to be the second city in the British Empire; but in my opinion an easy first in dirt and squalor) Englishmen, and others, toil all day in a vile climate for the sole purpose of acquiring more wealth than their fellows: but in the Talung Valley, which has meadows as green as any in Europe, and some of the finest mountain scenery in the world, money is considered of little importance, and one man

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untrammelled as I had been led to believe the Lepchas still did; and that if this were really true, I wanted to see where we, in our ignorance and haste, had made mistakes. Also, there might be some things in which we could help the Lepchas. We were neither of us doctors; but we had plenty of simple medicines and would do what we could. All we wanted was to live quietly in the village: to talk to people, and see how they ordered their lives. We would give no trouble; nor did we shoot or fish. Somehow I convinced him and he agreed that we might go. He would collect coolies to carry our baggage and we could start as soon as they had finished their meal. "Could we be ready by ten o'clock?" We could.

We dropped quickly down to the Teesta, crossed the iron suspension bridge, which was plentifully decorated with votive Buddhist flags, and had struggled to the top of the pass, called Sungphyok Hlo, which is the real entrance to the Talung, by midday. This low pass is formed by a ridge that runs at right angles to the main Talung Valley and is duplicated on the other side of the river which here runs through a small gorge. I was told that it was formed in this way.

Konchen is the lord of all the devils. His elder daughter is Chomo Hla Ri (Chomolari is on the edge of the Tibetan plateau and was climbed last year, for the first time, by Mr. F. Spencer Chapman), and his younger daughter is called Gongtuk Hlo, which is a ridge running down to the Teesta between Mangen and Singhik. Now the hill behind Lingtem is called Lungi Pano, or King Lungi, and he had a daughter named Sundem Pandi who was married to Sungphyok Hlo. The ridge opposite to Sungphyok Hlo is called Kahypo Hlo, and at one time these two were constantly quarrelling over the possession of King Lungi's daughter. Since they were unable to agree Konchen decided to put a stop to their quarrels, and so it was that he sent his daughter Gongtuk Hlo to part them. Gongtuk Hlo has remained there ever since; and thus the two have never been able to meet again.

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491 As for the roads, these, including the bridges, are all easily negotiable by the most timid. Those of active habit may walk all the marches without excessive fatigue, the more leisurely-inclined may ride on ponies, readily obtainable from Darjeeling, while ladies, not equal to the exertion, may be carried in dandies over all the bungalow routes."

Tours in Sikkim.

Awful influence of the Lakeland poets.

000 "For persons travelling solely for pleasure, and without any specific hobby, the visions of the snows, the ever-changing effects of light and shadow on the frost-clad mountains, the fragrant air of the woodlands, or the life-giving breezes of the mountain-tops will be joys sufficient in themselves, while those interested in any special pursuit such as sketching, photography, botany, natural history, etc., will find Sikkim an ideal field for these occupations."

Ibid.

Sikkim can be particularly recommended for the study of "etc.," which, I must confess, is my chosen hobby.

You have been warned!

"Ladies will find woollen knickers or combinations a comfort when crossing the higher passes."

Ibid.

How to travel.

PART I. PROFESSIONAL.

"It will be found most satisfactory to walk down hill and ride up, a method of progression best for man and beast. The *syces* should be made to follow close, and they may carry light things such as hand-cameras, field-glasses, waterproofs and articles which may be required from time to time on the march. A halt for lunch may be made at any pretty or convenient place, and the tiffin-coolie should be able to make all the arrangements for an alfresco meal. He should never be far away while on the march, and a good man will

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presents could not possibly have arrived at a less inconvenient moment. We eventually left at about ten o'clock, in pouring rain, and to the accompaniment of the monastery band, which went with us for about a quarter of a mile. Tafoor told me not to worry about the weather: he has set everything out and it will certainly be fine to-morrow.

We reached Lungdeum in a couple of hours, after which the path degenerated into the very roughest of tracks through the forest, climbing up and down a great deal. In a number of places the hillsides were too steep for an ordinary path, and here and there narrow lengths of sliced bamboo had been fastened across the cliff face. These are easily negotiable in dry weather by anyone walking barefoot; but a real death-trap when wet to anyone wearing nailed boots, as a false step is liable to precipitate one at least twenty or thirty feet down the hillside, and may even have more serious consequences. The Lepchas laughed at my extremely clumsy efforts to retain my balance. Rubber-soled shoes are the best type of footgear for this sort of work; but in wet weather they merely add to one's difficulties. For anyone who is unaccustomed to walk barefoot it would probably be best to wear a couple of pairs of thick socks or stockings and discard one's boots; they do at least give a good grip on the slippery bamboo planks.

By four o'clock we had dropped down to the river, which had to be crossed before the final climb up to the camping site at the entrance to the narrow valley that leads up to the monastery. Most of the coolies, who had left Lingtem a long time before me, were waiting on the other side, perhaps in order to have a good laugh at me crossing the bridge. I must confess that I find these Lepcha bridges most terrifying. They are made of heavy strands of cane, joined together and anchored to huge trees on either side of the river. The two main strands also serve as a handrail, and from them smaller canes are suspended at intervals so as to form a series of U-shaped loops. Into these loops long lengths of sliced bamboo are placed end to end. These form the actual

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491 footway, which is only about six inches wide. Although the bridge rocks and sways in the most alarming fashion there is not the slightest danger provided one keeps one's head: one slip, however, and there is nothing more to be done; one is precipitated into the river below, from the whirlpools and currents of which there is no escape. The Lepchas themselves cross these bridges at a trot, at the same time carrying a heavy load. [481]

Palden warned me that it would be disastrous to cross in boots; so, very gingerly, I started off in my stockinged feet. My instinct was to go blindly forward with my eyes closed, but it was necessary to select each separate foothold with care, at the same time carefully sliding one's hands forward along the "handrail" each time one took a step forward: it was soon obvious that if all else failed I could never earn my living as a tight-rope walker. The whole trick of crossing these bridges consists in keeping one's gaze fixed, as far as possible, on some spot on the opposite bank. When I was nearing the centre I foolishly looked down at the river; the effect was as though the water was standing still, and the bridge itself appeared to be moving rapidly upstream. Fortunately, someone on the far side shouted to me to look straight ahead, or I think I might have lost my balance. For a second everything appeared to be going round and round in a circle; but I had sufficient control not to loose my handholds. I arrived on the other side pouring with sweat and with a pounding heart. Gratefully, I replaced my boots. I was filled with ridiculous self-satisfaction, which the coolies' unrestrained laughter at my clumsiness did nothing to damp.

We reached the camping site just as dusk was falling. It was still pouring with rain and the valley was filled with clouds. The tent was wet through, and most of my bedding was damp. I did not mind it a bit: it was grand to be alone, and on the move again.

2nd June:

A Lama from Talung arrived during the night. He says

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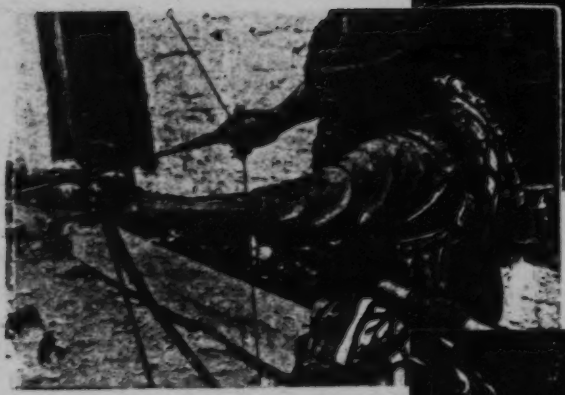
1191

A Lepcha bridge.

411
291
142



Karma demonstrating the method of using a bow and arrow.

487

"Road" in the upper Talang Valley.

[Facing p. 298]